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REPRINT OF ENGLISH TRACTS.

NO. 1.

THE REAL PRESENCE.

By RICHARD FREDERICK LITTLEDALE, LL.D., D.C.L.,

Priest of the Church of England.

I. The Christian Church teaches, and has always taught, that in the Holy Communion, after Consecration, the Body and Blood of the LORD JESUS CHRIST are "verily and indeed" present on the Altar under the forms of Bread and Wine.

II. The Church also teaches that this Presence depends on God's will, not on man's belief, and therefore that bad and good people receive the very same Thing in communicating, the good for their benefit, the bad for their condemnation.

III. Further, that as CHRIST is both God and Man, and as these Two Natures are for ever joined in His One Person, His Godhead must be wherever His Body is, and therefore He is to be worshipped in His Sacrament.

IV. The Body and Blood present are that same Body and Blood which were conceived by the HOLY GHOST, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, ascended into Heaven, but they are not present in the *same manner* as they were when CHRIST walked on earth. He, as Man, is now *naturally* in Heaven, there to be till the Last Day, yet He is *supernaturally*, and just as truly, present in the Holy Communion, in some way which we cannot explain, but only believe, knowing as we do, that since He rose from the dead, His Body has more than human powers, as He showed by passing through closed doors. (S. John xx, 19).

This is the Doctrine of the Real Presence.

There is nothing else in the world at all like it, but two common things may give some little help to us in trying to understand it.

a. The sun is in the sky, at a vast distance from us, shining over the earth. We can collect his rays in a burning-glass, or reflect them back from a mirror, so as to bring the heat and light very close to us. Unless the sun were truly present, the burning-glass and mirror could give us no notion of his shining. The Blessed Sacrament is such a burning-glass, such a mirror, to bring the love of CHRIST close to us.

It could not do this if it were *only* a memorial of Him, any more than a burning-glass would act if we merely held it before a painted picture of the sun.

b. Two people, parted by the whole Atlantic Ocean, can converse with one another by telegraph. The spark which starts from one end of the cable is at the other end instantaneously, and so long as the electric force is kept up, so long will the communication go on. Without that wonderful, unseen power, the cable, and the strong wish of the two people to speak with each other, could do nothing.

The Blessed Sacrament is the bond between Heaven and earth, and Divine power enables CHRIST to come down to us through it, without leaving Heaven.

The reason for believing the Real Presence is because the Bible tells us about it no less than eight different times, in order to impress it fully on us. S. Matthew (xxvi. 26, 28), S. Mark (xiv. 22, 24), S. Luke (xxii. 19, 20), and S. Paul (1 Cor. xi. 24, 25), all tell us that Our LORD JESUS CHRIST said of the Bread and Wine in Holy Communion "THIS IS MY BODY. THIS IS MY BLOOD." And S. John, the only Evangelist who does not give the history of the Institution of the Sacrament, records for us a long discourse of Our LORD's, wherein He says (amongst much else to the same effect), "EXCEPT YE EAT THE FLESH OF THE SON OF MAN, AND DRINK HIS BLOOD, YE HAVE NO LIFE IN YOU." (vi. 53). And again: "FOR MY FLESH IS MEAT INDEED, AND MY BLOOD IS DRINK INDEED." (vi. 55).

Besides these five statements, we have three more, from S. Paul. First: "The Cup of Blessing which we bless, is it not the Communion of the Blood of CHRIST? The Bread which we break, is it not the Communion of the Body of CHRIST?" (1 Cor. x. 16).

The two next show us that our faith or unbelief makes no difference in the Sacrament, though a very terrible difference to our souls.

"Whosoever shall eat this Bread or drink this Cup of the LORD unworthily, shall be guilty of the Body and Blood of the LORD." (1 Cor. xi. 27).

"He that eateth or drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself; not discerning the LORD's Body." (1 Cor. xi. 29).

Against these eight most solemn sayings of the Bible, and against the belief of all true Christians for the first fifteen hundred years of our Faith, Protestants raise the following objections:—

Obj. 1. "This is My Body" means only "This represents My Body," just as when CHRIST said "I am the Vine," "I am the Door," not meaning that He really was a tree or a plank.

Answer. The order of the words, and the form of the sentence, are quite different in the two cases. If CHRIST had pointed to a particular vine or door, and said "This Vine is I Myself," "This Door is I Myself," then there would be a likeness, but He never said anything of the kind. He did not say merely in a general way that He was Bread, but that a particular Thing, which seemed only Bread, was His Body.

Obj. 2. Eating the flesh of any one, or drinking his blood, is only a common Hebrew way of saying that we listen to and believe in his teaching, and do not mean what they seem to imply, but are like our phrases, "devouring" a book, or "drinking in" a speech.

Answer (a). Hooker's rule in explaining the Bible is the safest. He says, "That [meaning] which is furthest from the letter [or plain sense of the words] is commonly the worst." (b). But setting that aside, if it be true that the Jews used often to speak of disciples eating the flesh and drinking the blood of their teacher, meaning only that they took in his lessons, why were they so startled when

CHRIST spoke of it to them? Why did they say "How can this Man give us His Flesh to eat?" (S. John vi. 52), and why did even His disciples call it "a hard saying?" (c). In fact, it is not true that the words, wherever else they occur in the Bible, denote anything but their plain meaning. Here are all the texts where they are found. Lev. xxvi. 29; Numb. xxiii. 24; Deut. xxviii. 53; Ps. xxvii. 2; Isaiah ix. 20, xlix. 26; Jer. xix. 9; Rev. xvi. 6, xvii. 6. Here are two fully given. Look out the rest for yourself.

"I will feed them that oppress thee with their own flesh, and they shall be drunken with their own blood, as with sweet wine." Isaiah xlix. 26.

"I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the Saints, and with the blood of the Martyrs of Jesus." Rev. xvii. 6. Does this last text mean that the woman followed and loved the teaching of the Saints and Martyrs?

Obj. 3. The sixth chapter of S. John has nothing to do with the Holy Communion.

Answer (a). No one ever thought of saying so till a Roman Cardinal, named Cajetan (who died in 1534), first ventured to do it, because he was hard pressed by some Protestants who quoted that chapter as an argument for giving the Cup to the laity. (b). Unless the chapter does mean the Holy Communion, then S. John says nothing about that most solemn rite, though it forms the subject of the one revelation which S. Paul has recorded for us. (c). After the miracle of changing *water* into wine (ii. 1—12), CHRIST gives a discourse on Baptism (iii. 1—9). After the miracle of *feeding* five thousand (vi. 5—15), He gives another discourse (vi. 32—59) about a fresh mystery, which is most simply and reasonably explained as being the other great Sacrament.

Obj. 4. S. John's account *does* mean some kind of Presence of CHRIST in the Sacrament, but only a spiritual one in the hearts of believers, for CHRIST says "It is the spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing, the words which I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life."

Answer (a). According to this, *spiritual* means *unreal, imaginary, fanciful*. But spiritual things are far more true and real than fleshly things. An angel is a spirit, but he is just as truly a living creature as a man. A man's soul is a more important part of him than his body.

(b). This explanation contradicts S. Paul, who says that CHRIST's Body and Blood are present, whether we believe or not. (1 Cor. xi. 27, 29). So, when CHRIST was going to raise Jairus' daughter, crowds touched His Body, but only one woman was healed by it, because she only had faith. Yet His Body was there all the same for them as for her, only they did not believe. (S. Luke viii. 43—49). (c). The text "It is the spirit," &c., comes immediately after a verse wherein our LORD foretells His Ascension. The *spiritual* Presence of which He speaks must therefore be as *real* as the Ascension.

Obj. 5. The doctrine of the Real Presence contradicts our

senses, which tells us that what we eat and drink in the Holy Communion is mere bread and wine.

Answer (a). The senses of the Jews told them that the "carpenter's Son" was a mere man like themselves, and not God Almighty.

(b). We cannot see, hear, smell, taste, or touch that thing in us which makes the difference between our being alive and being dead bodies. But it is there all the same, a *spiritual* presence within us, and yet the most *real* part of us.

(c). Our senses tell us plainly that the sun rises and sets, and that the earth never moves. Every learned man knows and can prove that the earth is always moving, and that the sun does not rise and set. Unlearned people cannot prove it, but they trust what learned men say. When CHRIST Himself is the teacher, why should we not believe Him, though what He says is beyond our understanding?

The true reason why people disbelieve the Real Presence is because they do not fully acknowledge that God is Almighty and can do what He pleases. Infidelity is at the bottom of the denial. It should be carefully remembered that the doctrine is not a new one, nor held by a few people only. Every one who professed to be Christian held it till three hundred years ago, and the great majority of professing Christians hold it still.

Is it not most strange, if the doctrine be not true, that CHRIST, Who knew all things, should not have given some warning, some explanation of His words, if they were not to be taken literally? Why did He let some of His disciples "go back, and walk no more with Him." (S. John vi. 66), when a few words, telling them that He was only speaking a parable, would have made all clear? Why did He allow His greatest Saints, His most valiant Martyrs, His most successful missionaries, to live and die in a false belief, and reserve the discovery of His meaning for men in a late age, and, for the most part, of unholy lives?

Lastly, there are many people not so unbelieving as those with whom we have been dealing, who say that though CHRIST is not actually present in the Sacrament, yet His grace, power, and strength are there, and that faithful communicants get as much good from it as though He were really there in Person. Now this is just as hard to understand as the Catholic doctrine, and is an even *greater* miracle. For it is much stranger than full Divine grace should be given where CHRIST is *not* than where He *is*. And as this doctrine is not hinted at in the Bible, and was never taught by the Church, those who maintain it might as well accept the miracle which *is* in the Bible instead of inventing one for themselves.

"Blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed." S. John xx. 19.

